Generating Offense

In debate, offense wins championships.

I. Why debaters don’t generate enough offense.

a. People are lazy, so they don’t know the major link and internal link arguments

2. Debaters have not thought about which arguments are weakest on the topic.

3. People try to make the same mechanical answers over and over again because they’re comfortable.

a. People are afraid to commit to an offensive strategy because developing offense trades off with making more arguments.

b. Debaters prefer to hide in a grind-it-out defensive battle to muddle the round and try to win.

c. Debaters are top-heavy in refuting the framework and the standard. Spend time on the contentions if you don’t need to win their standard.

d. Debaters think offense is a luxury, not a necessity. However, it is a necessity if you want to be great at debate.

i. People are really comfy with their offensive strategy, but the point is, even if you’re comfortable with your case, make offensive arguments on your opponent’s case.

ii. People are comfortable with a few arguments, so they cross-apply them over and over.

e. Debaters are spoiled by bad judges who vote off defense and presumption.

i. On the national circuit, this tendency is not the norm. Good judges will not vote on these issues.

ii. The same judges will vote for you more regularly if you run offensive arguments.

iii. Judges don’t prefer defense to offense, but they settle as an easy-way-out in deadlocked rounds.

f. Debaters don’t fully understand which arguments are offensive.

i. Offense is not a proactive reason to vote for you.

1. Proactive means allowing something to happen rather than responding to something that happens.

2. Reactive means in response to something else.

3. These two words have no significance in debate.

ii. Offense is a reason why your advocacy is better than your opponent’s advocacy.

1. Advocacy is any argument you support in a debate round. Notice the focus on comparison.

2. Offense is the sum of your impacts that’s good for you and bad for your opponent.

iii. Offense is a comparative net benefit for your side.

iv. You must highlight exactly why your world is better than your opponent’s. Comparisons may vary in terms of what’s involved, but you need to compare to win.

II. The Problem With Lack of Offense

1. Arguments are repetitive.

a. If your arguments lack diversity, your opponent can group all your arguments and answer them at once.

b. You need to give yourself multiple outs to win because only relying on one means putting all your eggs in one basket.

c. Your opponent can kick out of more arguments without hurting themselves with turns.

2. You get spread out if you don’t have enough offense.

a. Your opponent will still spread if they’re good.

i. Aff must generate offense on the NC so that the 2NR can’t kick case and destroy the AC.

ii. Neg must put as much pressure as possible on the 1AR.

iii. Without offense on which to rely, you can’t salvage the round by outweighing.

3. If you don’t generate enough offense, you lose close debates.

a. Advocacies become unclear when defensive battles emerge.

4. This problem is cyclical.

a. You win enough without generating offense that you don’t feel the pressure to change your strategy.

III. Why Generating Offense is So Important

1. Diversification makes it more difficult for your opponent to respond to arguments.

2. You have more flexibility heading into the last rebuttal.

3. No debate is close if you’re winning a ton of offense.

4. Your mentality of attacking your opponent with offense will make you better at everything else in debate.

a. More aggressive in cross-examination.

b. You’ll use prep time more efficiently to target weak points in the case.

c. Your reputation will increase from leaving the flow and connecting with the judge.

d. Your refutation will improve because making offensive arguments forces you to synthesize and weigh very clearly.

e. You will be perceptually dominant. Going for turns and big disadvantages make you take on the approach of a dominant debater with more confidence in your arguments.

IV. How to Generate Offense

1. General tips

a. Understand the link chain and how your opponent’s link story works

b. Be able to isolate each part of the link chain. To do this effectively, you must realize that link chains are just causality arguments. Thus, figure out what causes the impact.

c. Don’t be afraid to concede the framework and go directly to contention-level offensive arguments. You don’t have to answer every single framework argument.

d. Offensive strategies pre-suppose consequentialism.

i. Turning strategies and saying they do something worse don’t work against deontology unless you frame the standard in terms of consequentialism.

ii. If you debate a person who does pre-suppose consequentialism, and consequentialism would say any consequence is important, not only over-specified ones. Force the debate to the impact level, not the standards level.

2. Link chains start with your opponent’s advocacy and end with a terminal impact.

a. Think of internal links as zippers that zip up to an end impact.

3. There is a large relationship between uniqueness and links that should never go away. All uniqueness does is explain the situation before the link happens. Uniqueness claims are huge to the comparison.

a. Reversing uniqueness is key to taking out your opponent’s strategy and setting up turns.

b. Run turns with uniqueness claims that are hard to reverse, ones where the terminal impact is the weakest part of the link chain.

4. To turn an argument, you must state the opposite of what your opponent said and argue that what your opponent said is actually support for your side.

a. State the type of turn you’re making.

b. The more precise you are, the harder it is for your opponent to claim your turn is non-responsive.

c. The more precise you are, the less likely you’ll label a non-turn a turn.

d. The more precise you are, the less likely you will double-turn yourself.

e. Find the weakest part of the link chain and attack it.

i. Give multiple warrants.

ii. Make deep warrants.

iii. Read evidence against the weakest part of the link chain.

f. The smart spread always beats the blip spread.

g. A straight turn means, “Do not read defense.”

5. Link turns.

a. If you win a link turn, you win exclusive access to the terminal impact. Say, “If I win a link turn, I get exclusive access to my opponent’s terminal impact and they can’t claim the impact.”

b. Whenever the terminal impact is big, go for the link turn so that you gain access. Isolate the causal mechanism in the argument and flip the link.

6. Winning an internal link turn wins exclusive access to the terminal impact. You must weigh internal links against each other with weighing. Internal link turns are hard to answer, but it requires one more step.

7. Impact turn.

a. Impact turns won’t work against good debaters because they’ll have good evidence backing up the impact.

b. Impact turns are the friends of critical debaters because most critical arguments reject fairly intuitive assumptions.

8. Exploit the double-turn.

a. Appears way more often than you think.

b. How do you go for a double-turn?

i. Go up and explain that one is a link turn and one is an impact turn / internal link turn. Concede both arguments. Then say that the terminal impact of the double-turn outweighs anything else in the round because they then need to win a bigger terminal impact in the round.

c. When people turn the standard and then link turn case, it is functionally a double-turn. People mislabel their arguments all the time, so figure it out for yourself and abuse them.

9. Disadvantages are external offensive arguments unrelated to the link chain yet caused by your opponent’s advocacy.

a. Prioritize turns over disadvantages.

10. When theory is weak, it is easy to run strong offensive arguments against it.

a. Good additional layer of offense against your opponent.

V. Three Drills

1. Force yourself in practice rounds to make 60-75% of your responses offensive.

2. Kick your standard, accept theirs, and straight-turn the position.

3. Sit down and diagram the major link stories on both sides of the topic. Cut evidence on every potential link, internal link, and impact turn.

VI. Conclusion

1. Don’t be lazy. Do the research: it’s worth it. You have to know causal mechanisms inside-out, giving your opponent more ground yet turned ground.

2. Don’t be afraid to accept your opponent’s standard and go for turns.

3. Be specific. Be precise. Be aggressive.